CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT VOYAGES OF DISCOVEEY

§1 •

"TEE greatest event which has happened since tlie creation of the world (leaving aside the incarnation and death of Him whojnade it) is the discovery of the Indies" wrote a sixteenth-century Spaniard, Francisco Lopez de Gomara, dedicating his *Hispania Felix* to the Emperor Charles V* There was less exaggeration in this statement than was customary in such effusions; for the disclosure of the sea-route to India in the one direction, and of the existence of the vast American Continent in the other, was among the most epoch-making occurrences in all recorded history. The succession of maritime discoveries, at the close of the fifteenth century, suddenly enlarged men's horizons, shewing them the existence of a new world, other than that known to their fathers and fathers[5] fathers before them. It provided humanity with a new universe to conquer. It shifted the balance of power from the Mediterranean to the countries of the Atlantic coast. It laid the foundation of Europe and of the world as we know them to-day.

The discovery of America and of the Indies was not, to be sure, a sudden stroke of genius or of luck, but the culmination of a gradual movement spread over many generations. The earth had, from antiquity, been

regarded as a sphere of which only a small part was known, > Already in the thirteenth century$_K$ the English friar," Roger Bacon, had adduced the authority of Hebrew